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ABSTRACT

Three current basal reading series were examined to determine the racial and sexual characteristics of the main characters of the stories and in the illustrations. All of the textbooks from preprimer through the sixth grade level were included in the analysis of the Ginn; Holt, Rinehart, and Winston; and Macmillan series. Eight-hundred sixteen main characters were counted in the 1975-77 editions of the three series. As each story was read the sex and race of the main character was noted. The five categories of race noted were: white, black, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian. The total number of main characters was 816--329 females and 487 males. In every category except Hispanic, male main characters outnumbered female main characters. Three previous editions of the same series were examined to see if a shift had been made in the make up of the characters; there was a decrease of 204 in the total number of males and an increase of 104 in the number of females. When illustrations were analyzed according to the major figure, males again outnumbered females. (MKM)

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# EQUAL RIGHTS VERSUS EQUAL NUMBERS

A Research Study Conducted by

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The Equal Rights Amendment movement has brought about many changes. Susan B. Anthony's image is now engraved on silver dollars. Women sportswriters interview baseball players in a once "males only" domain, the locker room. Occasionally a man can be found operating a nursery school or teaching kindergarteners. While adjustments have been made, some things still remain. A billboard displays a beautiful woman peering over the shoulder of a very macho man as he smokes a particular brand of cigarette. And the success of Charlie's Angels can hardly be entirely due to justice prevailing in the end.

As with other social institutions, ERA has caused education to be reviewed. Textbooks and tradebooks have been closely examined in recent years. This study looked at two aspects: the illustrations and main characters in basal reader series to compare the incidence of males and females.

## Review of Related Literature

Several studies have compared the number of females with the number of males in both character roles and illustrations. Nilsen (1971) dis some impromptu research when she thumbed through fifty-eight picture books on a display cart for use by instructors of children's literature at Eastern

Michigan University. She found twenty-five of the books contained a picture of a woman in them and all but four of the twenty-five books had the woman wearing an apron. Nilsen conducted another study using the winners and runner-ups of the Caldecott Award over a twenty year period. One-fourth of the eighty books in the study had "token" females.

A study by Graebner (1972) used the Scott, Foresman, 1962-63 and 1971 editions, and Ginn, 1961 and 1969 editions, reading series. In all, 554 stories were examined. Graebner found boys outnumbered girls as major characters by seventy-five percent in the 1971 and 1969 editions of Scott, Foresman and Ginn respectively. She also found that boys outnumbered girls in illustrations in the 1961-63 editions by 58.1 percent and in the 1969-71 editions by 67.5 percent.

The 1966 and 1971 Houghton-Mifflin reading series were compared by Schnell and Sweeney (1975). They found 814 illustrations containing boys with 634 illustrations containing girls in the 1966 edition, the percentages being 56.2 and 43.8 respectively. The 1971 edition had an even higher proportion of boys to girls with 763 illustrations containing boys compared to 319 illustrations containing girls. The percentages were 70.5 for boys and 29.5 for girls. The number of stories with female main characters decreased by twenty-three percent between the 1966 and the 1971 editions.

A study reported by Saario et al (1973) involved four reading series: Ginn, Harper and Row, Scott, Foresman and the Bank Street Series. Every third story was reviewed. Female adults as main characters were found to be significantly under represented. The total number of female characters decreased in the first grade readers through the third grade readers.

Marten and Matlin (1976) examined sixteen basal readers, eight at the first grade level and eight at the sixth grade level. The publishing companies of the basal readers were Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, Lyons and Carnahan, Lippincott, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, and Scott, Foresman. Marten and Matlin found 751 illustrations contained females while 1719 illustrations contained males, roughly a ratio of 3:7.

Design of the Study

Three reading series were examined in this study: Ginn, 1976 edition, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977 edition, and Macmillan, 1975 edition. All of the textbooks from preprimer through the sixth grade level were included.

Research was conducted on the main characters and illustrations. Stories were used for the study. Poetry, skill pages and plays were excluded.

A tally system was used to keep track of the main characters. Title I guidelines were adopted for the categories of the races of the main characters. The five categories were: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian. Only human beings were tabulated; animals were omitted from the study. As each story was read, the number, sex and race of the main character(s) were noted on a tally sheet along with a tally mark for the story.

In some instances the pictures which accompanied the stories were used to determine the sex and/or race of the main characters.

Eight hundred sixteen main characters were counted in the 1975-77 editions of the three reading series. In every category except Hispanic, male main characters outnumbered female main characters. (See table 1) There were twenty-four Hispanic female main characters compared with fourteen Hispanic male main characters, 63.16 percent versus 36.84 percent. (See table 2) Asian females numbered thirteen while Asian males totaled thirty-one. The percentages were 38.24 for the females and 61.76 for the males. Surprisingly, American Indian female main characters came the closest to being represented the same number of instances as their male counterparts. Nineteen main characters were American Indian females with twenty-seven main characters being American Indian males. Males held the advantage in percentage by 58.7 to 41.3 percent. The total number of White main characters was 578, 234 females and 344 males. The percentage break-

down was 40.48 for females and 59.52 for males.

Males outnumbered females when all categories were considered. (See table 3) The total number of main characters was 816, 329 females and 487 males. White males made up 42.16 percent of all main characters. White females were the next largest group with 28.68 percent. Black males contributed 8.7 percent, nearly double the 4.78 percent of their female counterparts. Hispanic males and Asian females combined made up only slightly over three percent of the total.

The number of female main characters was compared with the number of male main characters in the 1975-77 editions by using a 2 by 5 Chi-square analysis. (See table 1) The cell headings were the same categories used for the races. With four degrees of freedom, Chi-square equalled 11.469 which was statistically significant at the .05 level. There was a significant difference between the number of females included as main characters and the number of males included as main characters.

Three previous editions were also examined to see if a shift had been made in the make up of the number of male and female main characters. The three editions were: Ginn, 1969-70, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973 and Macmillan, 1970. The same research techniques that were applied to the 1975-77 editions were used for the 1969-73 editions.

The number of male main characters in the old editions (1969-73) were compared with the number in the new editions (1975-77). The number of White males decreased from 535 to 344. Black males decreased from 103 to 71 while the number of Hispanic males increased by five and the number of American Indian males more than doubled. There was a decrease of 204 in the total number of males as main characters between the old and the new editions.

The number of male main characters in the two editions were compared using a 2 by 5 Chi-square computation. (See table 4) The five cell headings were the same as the races for the Title I guidelines, White, Black, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian. The result was a Chi-square equal to 18.595 with four degrees of freedom. This was statistically significant at the .001 level.

Female main characters in the old editions were likewise compared with those in the new editions. (See table 5) Unlike the number of White males, the number of White males, the number of White females increased by fifty-nine. The number of Asian females doubled whilte the number of American Indian females tripled. Incredibly, the number of Hispanic females quadrupled. The total number of female main characters increased from 225 in the 1969-73 editions to 329 in the 1975-77 editions.

A 2 by 5 Chi-square analysis, similar to that done with the data for the male main characters was done comparing the female main characters in the two sets of editions. Chi-square equalled 10.165 with four degrees of freedom which was significant at the .05 level. Thus, both the number of male and the number of female main characters has changed significantly between the 1969-73 and the 1975-77 editions of readers this study reviewed.

Females were found to share the main character status 94 times in the 1969-73 editions while 119 times in the 1975-77 editions when all three reading series were included. Males shared the main character position 178 times in the old editions but only 156 times in the new editions. Therefore, an increase occurred in the number of times females shared the main character status, however, a decrease was noted in the number of males in the same situation.

One unusual thing occurred when Holt, Rinehart and Winston updated their 1973 edition. The 1973 edition of A Time for Friends had a story entitled "Freddie in the Middle" written by Judy Blume. Freddie is a boy with an older brother and a younger sister. Holt's 1977 edition of A Time for Friends has basically the same story with a slight twist. The story, interestingly enough, "Maggie in the Middle," is about a girl, Maggie, who has an older sister and a younger brother. "Maggie in the Middle" was also written by Judy

Blume. The stories have the same theme, a child with an older sibling of the same sex and a younger sibling of the opposite sex. The child receives hand-me-downs from the older sibling and has to give up his/her room to the younger one. Life seems difficult for the child in the middle until the child, in the first edition, Freddie, and the second one, Maggie, gets the very important role of a green kangaroo in a school play.

Illustrations

Four thousand two hundred sixty-five illustrations from 898 stories in the 1975-77 editions were examined as to whether or not a significant difference exists between the number of illustrations with females as compared with the number of illustrations with males. The same five categories were used for race: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian. Again, only stories were used. Preprimer through grade six readers were examined.

Regardless of the number of persons in an illustration, only one count was given for a male/female per race for each illustration.

White males appeared in 2700 illustrations while White females appeared in 1948 illustrations. This was 58.19 percent versus 41.81 percent. The number of Hispanic males portrayed was 193 as compared with 186 Hispanic females came the closest to being a one to one ratio.

White males were represented in 30.79 percent of all illustrations. White females appeared in 27.75 percent,

16.26 percent over the next largest group represented, that of Black males with 11.49 percent. While American Indian females contributed 2.32 percent of the main characters, they only appeared in 1.68 percent of all illustrations.

A 2 by 5 Chi-square computation was found to equal 9.37 with four degrees of freedom which is statistically significant at the .05 level. (See table 6)

Summary

The publishers of basal readers seem to be following the old adage of providing material that interests boys because girls seen to have wider reading interests. Considering this factor, having an equal number of females and males as main characters and in illustrations could reduce the stories' motivation for boys.

It would be interesting to compare the number of illustrations containing only males with illustrations containing only females. Perhaps a weighted factor should be used when the main character of a story appears in an illustration.

More female main characters are visible in the newer editions but further analysis may reveal that space, number of pages, is not as supportive and that the content of the stories is written for boys. The anaysis might reveal this to be untrue also.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1

A Comparison of the number of Female Main Characters with the Number of Male Main Characters in the 1975-77 Editions of Ginn, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, and Macmillan.

| | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian | American Indian | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Female Main Characters in 1975-77 Editions | 234 | 39 | 24 | 13 | 19 | Total Number Female Main Characters in 1975-77 Editions = 329 |
| Number of Male Main Characters in 1975-77 Editions | 344 | 71 | 14 | 31 | 27 | Total Number Male Main Characters in 1975-77 Editions = 487 |
| Number of Main Characters by Race | 578 | 110 | 38 | 44 | 46 | Total Number Main Characters in 1975-77 Editions = 816 |

TABLE 2

Percentage of Male and Female Main Characters by Race

| | 1969-73 Editions | | 1975-77 Editions | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Males | Females | Males | Females |
| Whites | 75.35% | 24.65% | 59.52% | 40.48% |
| Blacks | 66.45% | 33.55% | 64.55% | 35.45% |
| Hispanic | 60.00% | 40.00% | 36.84% | 63.16% |
| Asian | 83.78% | 16.22% | 61.76% | 38.24% |
| American Indian | 68.42% | 31.58% | 58.70% | 41.30% |

TABLE 3

Percentage of All Main Characters

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| White Males | 58.41 | White Males | 42.16 |
| White Females | 19.1 | White Females | 28.68 |
| Black Males | 11.24 | Black Males | 8.7 |
| Black Females | 3.49 | Black Females | 4.78 |
| Asian Males | 3.38 | Asian Males | 3.8 |
| American Indian Males | 1.42 | American Indian Males | 3.3 |
| Hispanic Males | .98 | Hispanic Females | 2.94 |
| Asian Females | .66 | American Indian Females | 2.33 |
| Hispanic Females | .66 | Hispanic Males | 1.72 |
| American Indian Females | .66 | Asian Females | 1.59 |
| | 100.0% | | 100.0% |

TABLE 4

A Comparison of the Number of Male Main Characters in the 1969-73 Editions of Ginn, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, and Macmillan with the Number of Male Main Characters in the 1975-77 Editions.

| | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian | American Indian | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Male Main Characters in 1969-73 Editions | 535 | 103 | 9 | 31 | 13 | Total Number of Male Main Characters in 1969-73 Editions = 691 |
| Number of Male Main Characters in 1975-77 Editions | 344 | 71 | 14 | 31 | 27 | Total Number of Male Main Characters in 1975-77 Editions = 487 |
| Number of Male Main Characters by Race | 879 | 174 | 23 | 62 | 40 | Total Number of Male Main Characters = 1178 |

TABLE 5

A Comparison of the Number of Female Main Characters in the 1969-73 Editions of Ginn, Holt, Rinehart and Winston and Macmillan with the Number of Female Main Characters in the 1975-77 Editions.

| | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian | American Indian | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Female Main Characters in 1969-73 Editions | 175 | 32 | 6 | 6 | 6 | Total Number of Female Main Characters in 1969-73 Editions = 225 |
| Number of Female Main Characters in 1975-77 Editions | 234 | 39 | 24 | 13 | 19 | Total Number of Female Main Characters in 1975-77 Editions = 329 |
| Number of Female Main Characters by Race | 409 | 71 | 30 | 19 | 25 | Total Number of Female Main Characters = 554 |

TABLE 6

A Comparison of the Number of Females and Males Represented in Illustrations in the 1975-77 Editions of Ginn, Holt, Rinehart and Winston and Macmillan.

| | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian | American Indian | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Males in Illustrations | 2700 | 806 | 193 | 199 | 162 | Total Number of Males Represented in Illustrations = 4060 |
| Number of Females in Illustrations | 1948 | 548 | 186 | 153 | 118 | Total Number of Females Represented in Illustrations = 2953 |
| Number of Males and Females in Illustrations by Race | 4648 | 1354 | 379 | 352 | 280 | Total Number = 7013 |

TABLE 7

Percentage of Males and Females Represented in Illustrations
(1975-77 Editions)

| | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|
| White | 58.19% | 41.81% |
| Black | 59.53% | 40.47% |
| Hispanic | 50.92% | 49.08% |
| Asian | 56.53% | 43.47% |
| American Indian | 57.86% | 42.14% |